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## Multiple Levels of Influence on Wellbeing: Individual Factors, Relationships, and Life Events

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# Summary



This dissertation aimed to contribute to the research on the roles individual differences, relationships, and life events play in psychological wellbeing. It focused on individual wellbeing in one empirical chapter, and relationship wellbeing in the other three empirical chapters. Moreover, although three of these four empirical chapters drew attention to self-control's association with wellbeing, another chapter revealed that uncontrollable life events too affect wellbeing. Below, I will summarize the key findings in my empirical chapters and stress some concluding remarks.

### **Self-Control and Individual Wellbeing**

My first empirical chapter (Chapter 2) in this dissertation investigated the interplay between self-control and wellbeing. In two longitudinal studies using different populations and time intervals, this dissertation showed that both between-person differences and within-person deviations in self-control (i.e., intraindividual change in self-control over time) influence wellbeing. That is, the results first showed that people with higher levels of self-control are happier and more satisfied with their lives than people with lower levels of self-control. Second, the results revealed that when people had self-control levels higher than their average, they reported higher levels of wellbeing. Last, the results showed a bidirectional relation at the between-person level. People who had higher levels of self-control than others at a time point experienced higher levels of wellbeing than others at the later time point, and vice versa. Thus, this dissertation demonstrated the reciprocal association between self-control and individual wellbeing.

### **Self-Control and Relationship Wellbeing**

Chapter 3 investigated whether self-control provides people with the capacity to balance self-interests and partner-interests for the sake of relationship wellbeing. The focus of this dissertation was on intrusive behaviors, such as giving unsolicited advice to the partner and reading the partner's emails without permission. The results showed that people need not only trust in their partner, but also self-control in order to refrain themselves from intruding into their partner's privacy. This chapter demonstrated that the combination of trust in the partner and self-control contributes to relationship wellbeing by forestalling immoral and disrespectful behaviors toward the partner, even if doing so is contrary to one's own interests.

### **Self-Control and Family Wellbeing**

Chapter 4 considered wellbeing in family relationships, and investigated whether family members detect each other's self-control levels as an indicator

of their trustworthiness. The results showed that families with higher levels of perceived self-control (i.e., average of all family members) reported higher levels of trust than families with lower levels of perceived self-control. Furthermore, not only parents but also children trusted the family members, whom they perceived to have higher self-control, more. The results revealed that the positive association between perceived self-control and trust took place in 10 out of 12 dyadic relationships in four-member families. Thus, this dissertation showed that perceived self-control in a family member is an indicator of that family member's trustworthiness.

### **Uncontrollable Life Events and Relationship Wellbeing**

Chapter 5 zoomed in relationship wellbeing after one of the most devastating life events a person can experience, namely child loss. The results revealed that perception that the partner had dissimilar (higher or lower) levels of grief than oneself was negatively related to relationship satisfaction. Bereaved parents, who thought that they and their partner had similar levels of grief however, reported the highest level of relationship satisfaction. Moreover, the results showed that the negative effect of perceived dissimilarity in grief on relationship wellbeing increased over time. This decrease was greater among bereaved parents, who perceived themselves to have less grief than their partner, than it was among bereaved parents, who perceived themselves to have more grief than their partner. This chapter indicated that perceived dissimilarity in grief between bereaved parents may amplify the difficulties associated with their traumatic life experience.

### **Conclusion**

Our happiness, life satisfaction, and wellbeing in general are determined by many factors. This dissertation aimed to contribute to the scientific research on psychological wellbeing by focusing on three of these factors: individual differences, relationships, and life events. The findings in this dissertation highlighted the fact that all three factors play an important role in shaping wellbeing. Thus, the effects of individual, relationship, and contextual factors on wellbeing deserve further scientific evidence and provide exciting avenues for future research.